

Regional Ocean Exploration Workshops Summary Report: Volume I

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1 Introduction

During a seven-week period extending from late February through mid-April 2002, NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration (OE) conducted eight regional workshops at locations representing the diverse geographic interests of the oceanographic community. These workshops were conceived and designed to solicit the input of informed constituencies in order to refine the strategic priorities of the NOAA national Ocean Exploration Program while in its early stages of execution.

On behalf of NOAA, OE coordinates and conducts missions to explore regions of the oceans for the purposes of discovery and science. This OE program is currently operating under the guidance of the October 2000 Report of the President's Panel on Ocean Exploration, *Discovering Earth's Final Frontier: A U.S. Strategy for Ocean Exploration* (hereafter referred to as the *Frontier Report*).¹ The *Frontier Report* identified diverse and important goals and objectives that constitute a national strategy of ocean exploration at a recommended level of funding of approximately \$75 million (M) per year. The NOAA OE program currently has a \$14M annual budget and seeks to adopt the goals of the *Frontier Report* in the most productive way. To efficiently address these goals, OE produced a strategic framework² for the program that recognized the need for input from a broad community of stakeholders in order to provide focus for a synchronized OE Program Strategic Plan.

With the assistance of regional NOAA personnel, OE identified representatives to help define program priorities from the ocean exploration, science, education, technical, engineering, and communications professions, including participants from the federal, state, and tribal governments, plus members of academia, industry, and organizations that work with marine science and information. A representative cross-section of these contacts offered their time and energy as participants in each of the eight regional workshops.

This report provides an overview of the workshop process, presents information collected during the workshops, and presents the initial analysis of workshop results. Section 2 describes the design, development, and implementation of the workshop process. Section 3 provides results of the regional workshops and identifies common exploration needs categories, approaches, and related benefits, and a discussion centered on each of the eight workshop regions. Section 4 relates the workshop results to guidance in the *Frontier Report*, provides an assessment of capital asset needs that includes ship capacity and technology development, summarizes benefits realized from the exploration activities, presents potential partnerships, and addresses other issues related to ocean exploration priorities. Supporting data and information are included Volume II.

This volume reflects inputs provided by participants of the regional ocean exploration workshops introduced in Section 1. It is intended to accurately and collectively represent the information provided by these participants. During the course of analysis and quality control of these data, duplicative items have been combined, sensitive references to organizations and individuals have been removed, and consistency in presenting the information from each of the workshops has been sought. Every attempt has been made to ensure the information is complete. For reference purposes, the raw workshop data used to develop this volume are in Volume II.

Readers should recognize that the information contained herein represents the perspectives of the workshop participants only, augmented by additional comments received separately from invitees who were unable to attend. Appendix A provides contact information on workshop attendees, while Volume II contains the complete

invitation list for the regional workshops. The exploration needs, approaches, geographic areas of interest, technology needs, and potential partners listed in this report are based solely on the information provided by participants. No program priorities among identified needs are implied. The reader may conclude with confidence that the actual cross-section of ocean exploration stakeholders, both in the U.S. and abroad, extends significantly beyond the workshop participants. The information in this report—while representative of a large number of ocean exploration stakeholder needs—will be augmented with many additional needs, approaches, geographic interest areas, and partnerships as public and private involvement in NOAA’s ocean exploration initiatives expands and evolves.

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